



## **Transportation Advisory Committee**

Date: November 10, 2020.

Time: 7:00 PM – 9:30 PM.

Location: Conducted via Remote Participation (Zoom).

### **Minutes.**

#### **1. Administration.**

Members in Attendance: Dan Amstutz, Michael Barry, Bill Copithorne (for Wayne Chouinard), Melissa Laube, Jeff Maxtutis, Howard Muise, Tycho Nightingale, Corey Rateau, Scott Smith, Laura Swan, and Shoji Takahashi.

Members Missing: Wayne Chouinard, Lenard Diggins, Ray Jones.

Members of Public in Attendance: Jo Anne Preston and Paul Schlichtman.

The Chair read the script for remotely conducted meetings, referred the members to the agenda attachment entitled “Governor Charles Baker’s 3/12/2020 Executive Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law,” announced that the meeting was being recorded and reviewed the meeting ground rules.

The minutes of the October 14, 2020 meeting were approved on a roll call vote.

The Chair noted that no correspondence had been received for this session.

#### **2. Public Comments.**

There were no public comments.

#### **3. Town Issues/Activities.**

##### **A. Bill Copithorne provided an update from the Department of Public Works (DPW):**

Civil engineering work for the Minuteman Bikeway Project at Lake Street is now complete; the Bikeway is now open. Construction signage and storage will be removed soon. Loam and seeding, and other landscaping will be finished. Pavement markings are tentatively scheduled for the end of the week. In response to a

question from Scott Smith, Bill Copithorne responded that the contractor will paint crosswalk markings at Lake Street. Bicycle symbols for the bike lane on Lake Street likely will not be painted until the spring.

Dan Amstutz inquired about installing bicycle racks at the plaza areas of the project. He noted that the Town has funding from the Shared Streets Project that might be available for bicycle racks. Bill Copithorne confirmed that the Bikeway and Lake Street Project did not include funding for bicycle racks.

The new traffic signals at the Bikeway have not been turned on. Eversource will turn on the power, perhaps in the next week. Once power is connected, the signals at the Bikeway and Brooks Street will be coordinated. In response to a question from Jeff Maxtutis, Bill Copithorne responded that Green International (the Town's project consultant who completed the design) will return for the signal inspection. Dan Amstutz inquired about the variable speed limit signs on Lake Street. Bill Copithorne responded that the speed limit signs will go down to 20 mph during school hours as applicable. The signs will be reviewed on the punch list at project completion.

Pavement restoration on Bacon Street and Central Street is near completion.

Arlington Center Sidewalk Project is complete. There are a few punch list items to finalize.

Pavement markings, double-yellow center line, and crosswalks on some stretches of Massachusetts Ave and Park Ave have been refreshed. The winter moratorium on most roadwork projects begins on November 15, and there are scheduling challenges with the contractor. As such, Summer Street pavement markings will be refreshed in the spring.

**B. Dan Amstutz provided an update from the Department of Planning and Community Development.**

The Bluebikes winter season announcement was made this past week. Four "on-street" Bluebikes stations will be removed and stored by Bluebikes for the winter season and will be returned to their on-street locations around March. One "off-street" Bluebikes station at Magnolia Park near the Bikeway will remain in place for the winter.

Since the Bluebikes stations were installed, approximately 1,200 trips have been made. The Railroad Lot and Linwood Street at the Bikeway are the most-used stations.

The MBTA “Forging Ahead” proposal was released on its website to propose a realignment of service as the COVID-19 pandemic has caused a large decline in ridership (to approximately one quarter of levels compared to this time last year). The Fiscal Management and Control Board (FMCB) will be discussing changes in essential service for transit-dependent communities. In Arlington, the MBTA is contemplating eliminating Route 79 and Route 80 buses. (Changes to the Route 80 bus could depend on the Greenline Extension Project.) DPCD encourages the public to examine the MBTA Forging Ahead website and consider how the Town should respond. Dan Amstutz noted that December 4 is the end of the public comment period.

Connect Arlington Sustainability Plan is expected to be completed before year end. A final presentation and public engagement will occur shortly after Thanksgiving.

Mary Street Shared Streets Project data were compiled by Corey Rateau. The data showed reduced vehicle speeds and volumes. Laura Swan asked whether the Shared Streets changes would stay in place over the winter. Dan Amstutz responded that weather could adversely impact the temporary installations by moving or damaging the materials. As such, the temporary materials are to be removed next week.

**C. Corey Rateau provided an update from the Police Department.**

Parking enforcement has been restarted as of the day after election day. This process included training, updating signage, and repairing damaged meters and handheld devices. Corey Rateau added that you can now pay for parking with a smartphone via the Pay-by-Phone App in response to a question from Bill Copithorne.

Adjustments were made to parklets in the Heights and the Center.

**4. Vote: Additional \$100 for Pedestrian Flags**

Howard Muise informed the TAC that it will cost \$540 plus shipping to acquire four-hundred pedestrian flags. Last month, TAC authorized \$500 for the purchase of pedestrian flags, and he is requesting authorization for an additional \$100.

Motion to approve an additional \$100 to purchase pedestrian flags (for a total of \$600) was passed unanimously.

### **5. Discussion: Eskar Marijuana Dispensary**

The TAC Executive Committee received a request from the Arlington Redevelopment Board (ARB) regarding the Eskar Marijuana Dispensary, which is proposed for the first floor of a building at Broadway and Sunnyside Ave (23 Broadway). Comments are due by November 20. Howard indicated that the ARB did not request an examination of parking as there is ample on-street parking in the area. There also is a Route 87 bus stop at Broadway and Sunnyside Ave. Scott Smith added that the need for a crosswalk at that corner might arise.

Melissa Laube inquired about the Town's experience with the existing marijuana dispensary on traffic and parking. Corey Rateau responded that traffic volumes at the marijuana dispensary have been lower than expected, which may be COVID-19 related.

Howard Muise offered that the TAC Executive Committee may consider recommending making the exit from the building's parking lot to Sunnyside be designated for right turn only.

### **6. Discussion: Chestnut Street Traffic Calming**

Chestnut Street Traffic Calming draft memo (draft only) was reviewed by Howard Muise. He opened with the question of whether a crosswalk should exist at Chestnut Terrace to cross Chestnut Street. Based on personal observations and public input, he concluded that pedestrians would cross at this location regardless of whether there is a marked crosswalk or not. One reason not to have one located here is its proximity to the Mystic Street crosswalk (which might be counter to some design guides). Jeff Maxtutis installed pedestrian flags at this location since the previous TAC Meeting.

The 50' roadway width provides an opportunity for reconfiguring the street to incorporate parking, bike lanes with buffer lane, and travel lanes. The Town could consider a temporary installation to assess the utility of bump outs at the crosswalk. In addition, a push-button activation Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon (RRFB), similar to the one at Mill Street and the Bikeway might enhance pedestrian safety.

For the long term, the Town should consider redesigning the Chestnut Street and Mystic Street intersection, particularly to remove the large radius slip lanes. At present, these lanes permit higher vehicular speeds through the intersection, thereby reducing safety. Paul Schlichtman agreed, adding that automobiles treat the slip-lane traffic signal as a yield sign. The extant slip-lane design also creates a three-stage pedestrian crossing which, Dan Amstutz noted, makes it extremely inconvenient for pedestrians to cross.

One long-term design to consider at the Chestnut/Mystic intersection is a roundabout, which would reduce vehicular speeds. The roundabout

design might move the crosswalk closer towards Chestnut Terrace, obviating the need for the crosswalk at Chestnut Terr.

In response to a question from Laura Swan, Dan Amstutz noted that there is new guidance from MassDOT on roundabouts. Jeff Maxtutis added that roundabout design will need to consider bicycle traffic. Further, he pointed out that a two-lane roundabout design might be necessary based on 2012 traffic volume data. Traffic volume was balanced on all sides, which is favorable to a roundabout design.

Bill Copithorne asked whether a roundabout design would require MassDOT approval. Corey Rateau responded that it is a numbered route (Route 60 and U.S. Route 3) and the Town should coordinate with MassDOT. He added that removing traffic signals at Chestnut and Mystic could cause traffic to back up to Massachusetts Ave. Changes to the intersection might affect access to the Russell Common Municipal Lot and, separately, the Department of Children and Families (which also has parking access via Winslow Street and Prescott Street).

Corey Rateau added his concern that short-term crosswalk paint by itself might provide a false sense of security for pedestrians crossing Chestnut Street. Dan Amstutz responded that other improvements will be added to enhance safety at the crosswalk, such as the recently installed pedestrian flags. Additionally, materials from the Mary Street Shared Streets Program could be used to test design changes at the crosswalk. Additionally, the MassDOT Shared Streets program will be reinstated as another \$10 million has been set aside by the Governor for the program.

Paul Schlichtman asked TAC to revisit the parking signs on Chestnut Street, in particular to remove the "No Parking" signs and return the "4-hr Parking" signs. This request is consistent with the Arlington Center parking study, and he noted the inconsistent signage on the northside of the street. The presence of parked vehicles could slow vehicle traffic on Chestnut Street.

#### **7. Update: Arlington Net Zero Plan (presentation and discussion by Ken Pruitt)**

Ken Pruitt, the Town Energy Planner (DPCD) presented the Arlington Net Zero by 2050 Plan. He noted that Arlington residents overwhelmingly want decisive action, and in January 2018 the Select Board committed the Town to net zero by 2050.

The Town's greenhouse gas emissions are contributed by buildings, vehicles, and waste, approximately 62, 36 and 3 percent, respectively. Vehicle emissions are predominantly caused by passenger vehicles (as compared to commercial vehicles and transit) with passenger vehicles contributing approximately 33 percent of the total.

The focus in buildings is to maximize energy efficiency and electrify systems. Various programs have been implemented in the past to assist residents in electrifying, such as Solarize Arlington.

For the purposes of the presentation with the TAC, Ken Pruitt focused on vehicle emissions. One goal is to reduce vehicle miles traveled and facilitate zero-emissions mobility. He mentioned that Arlington Public Schools will have an electric school bus next calendar year. He responded to a question from Shoji Takahashi that safe travel for students (including zero-emissions mobility) is a fundamental part of the plan. There is overlap between Net Zero by 2050, which is generally more focused on electrification of transportation, and Connect Arlington, which is focused on all aspects of transportation.

Jeff Maxtutis commented about zoning and EV charging for residential parking. Dan Amstutz followed up inquiring about financial incentives for home EV charging stations. He also commented on the role of parking management as part of Net Zero plan.

Laura Swan encouraged the Town to-be proactive on e-scooter policy. Scott Smith added that the Tri-town Bike Committee has been discussing e-bikes and legislation. This topic arises in the context of their use on the Minuteman Bikeway in particular, but is broadly applicable as the Town considers zero-emissions mobility solutions. Shoji Takahashi commented on the need for residential storage and secure bicycle parking at destinations.

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#### **8. Update: Thompson School Traffic Calming (Laura Swan and Scott Smith)**

Scott Smith observed on a weekday morning "fairly busy but not chaotic" crowds arriving to school. Presently, one third of the students are attending school on in-person days. There is no traffic backup on River Street.

Laura Swan had contacted the Thompson School Principal to request a Safe Routes to School walk assessment.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 pm.